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Official Records

First Committee
14th Meeting
Friday, 23 October 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . . (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 63 to 80 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects; introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all items

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I should like first to remind delegations that if they wish an extension of time for the submission of draft resolutions they should inform me during this meeting.

(*spoke in English*)

I repeat: If delegations have any draft resolutions that they do not think can be ready for today, I ask them please to inform us of those that they wish to benefit from an extension.

In accordance with the programme of work and agreed timetable, this afternoon the Committee will move to the second stage of its work.

Mr. Shterk (Bulgaria): Since this is the first time I have spoken in the Committee, and since this is the first intervention in the thematic debate, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the Chair, and to express my confidence that under your able guidance the work of the Committee will make further significant progress.

In his statement made on behalf of the European Union, the representative of Austria outlined in a very clear manner the major areas where the First Committee will have to concentrate its efforts. This delegation has associated itself with that statement. I will therefore confine my intervention to a few issues of importance to my country. But before I do so allow me briefly to acquaint members with the basic premises of the Bulgarian Government's approach to security and disarmament.

Bulgaria favours what it calls a multidimensional vision of security, an approach attempting to take into account all pertinent security-related factors at different levels — universal, continental, regional and national. A cornerstone of Bulgaria's security policy is the pursuit of a speedy integration into the Euro-Atlantic security structures. A translation of this Euro-Atlantic orientation at the regional level is the active role my country plays in the promotion and development of security and defence cooperation among States in South-Eastern Europe, a process which gained momentum and substance at the Sofia Defence Ministerial in October 1997 and which was further advanced last September in Skopje.

We have the ambition of being a key factor in the emergence and reinforcement of what we call a belt of security around the troubled area in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This belt would comprise the stable democratic States in that part of Europe, able to project stability and spread the culture of democracy and peace throughout the region.

It is in this context that we continue to regard arms control and disarmament issues as integral elements of Bulgaria's security policy.

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Bulgaria continues to be deeply concerned about the situation in Kosovo. We are committed to remaining actively involved in the efforts of the international community to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict, based on respect for the rights and freedoms of all inhabitants of Kosovo and respect for the existing borders and territorial integrity of the States in the region. Being situated very close to Kosovo, Bulgaria naturally shares the concerns of the international community related to the proliferation of small arms in areas of internal conflict. Therefore, the Bulgarian Government supports the integrated and comprehensive approach adopted in the United Nations. We expect the United Nations to play a major role in promoting the control and reduction of small arms in a balanced and non-discriminatory manner.

In this regard, Bulgaria welcomes the valuable contribution made so far by the Panel of Governmental Experts, chaired by Ambassador Donowaki of Japan. We are expecting further measures and activities to be outlined in the Secretary-General's report to be presented at the fifty-fourth session.

My country supports the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, and expects a decision to this effect to be taken at the present session. We share the view that the exact time for the conference should be determined as soon as the preparatory process is completed. The b.oadest possible understanding of the objectives, scope and agenda of the conference should be pursued among all interested countries as a substantive prerequisite for its success.

Bulgaria is deeply concerned that the insufficient control of arms trafficking in certain countries and areas in South-Eastern Europe continues to have a negative impact on security- and stability-building efforts in our region. In order to address this and other challenges to regional security, the Bulgarian Government has launched a number of initiatives, including common activities to prevent illicit arms trafficking. In this regard, we concur with the view expressed by the recent Oslo meeting on small arms, that regional and subregional arrangements may be one way for Governments to successfully tackle this issue.

In recent years Bulgaria has repeatedly declared its adherence to the internationally recognized guidelines and rules relating to trade in arms and arms production technologies. These declarations have been backed by the establishment of a strict control and licensing regime in order to prevent unauthorized arms transfers. Currently Bulgaria is applying one of the most stringent policies with regard to arms control and trade in dual-use goods.

Another related issue to which Bulgaria has attributed particular importance in recent years is that of anti-personnel landmines. Convinced of the need to solve the great humanitarian problem caused by these deadly weapons, my country signed the Ottawa Convention in December 1997. We contributed further to the early entry into force of the Convention by being among the first 40 countries, and the first in South-Eastern Europe, to ratify this important instrument. We are now looking forward to the first meeting of the States parties to the Convention, and welcome the proposal made by Mozambique to host the meeting.

Being strongly committed to a timely and strict compliance with its obligations under the Ottawa Convention, Bulgaria would greatly appreciate appropriate support, including financial support, related in particular to mine clearance and the destruction of existing anti-personnel landmine stockpiles.

On the other hand, Bulgaria understands and respects the legitimate concerns of some countries that find it difficult at present to join the Ottawa process. In this regard, we believe that there is still room for the Conference on Disarmament to contribute to the fundamental goal of the complete elimination of anti-personnel landmines.

In conclusion, may I dwell on another important subject of relevance to us. The delegation of Bulgaria remains committed to respect for the internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones, based on arrangements freely agreed upon by the States concerned. They remain, in our view, an important element in international security and confidence-building and a relevant instrument of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The establishment of new such zones will certainly contribute to furthering nuclear disarmament, on condition that due account is taken of the legitimate security concerns of the States in question and that their right to freely choose their security arrangements is respected. Therefore, we believe that any new initiative in this area, in order to be productive, should be carefully prepared and discussed in advance with all the parties likely to be interested. Unfortunately, that seems not to have been the case with the most recent initiative on regional disarmament relating to Central and Eastern Europe, which was put forth in the absence of appropriate preceding consultations with all the

parties concerned. Therefore, we retain our strong reservations about the outcome of that idea.

The Chairman: I remind delegations that the time for general statements has passed. Now we are expected to address specific subjects and specific draft resolutions.

Ms. Eshmambetova (Kyrgyzstan): It is a great honour to present the views of the Kyrgyz Republic on the activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific.

Established on 8 June 1988, the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific pursued at the initial stage the very modest task of disseminating information on disarmament among the States of Asia and the Pacific. Its role, however, has significantly changed in the post-cold-war period, when the world has turned from nuclear expansion to nuclear reduction. There was a pressing need for an open dialogue which could promote transparency and trust among countries of the region.

In responding to this need, the Centre has offered a very valuable framework known as the "Kathmandu process", whose purpose it is to generate and sustain a dialogue on security issues in the Asia and Pacific region with a view to promoting openness, transparency and confidence-building and reaching the ultimate goal of preventing the outbreak of armed conflict and creating favourable conditions for conflict resolution.

The range of the agenda of the "Kathmandu process" is remarkably wide. It includes confidence-building measures, nuclear issues, conventional armaments, chemical and biological weapons, and various approaches to security, including new ones.

The format of the "Kathmandu process" is unique. Besides diplomats, it includes scholars and actors in the field of disarmament and security studies, policy planners and non-governmental organizations from various countries of the region. Since 1989 the Centre has held dozens of international conferences attended by hundreds of people. I was fortunate to be present at some of them, including the tenth anniversary meeting in Kathmandu from 22 to 24 February 1998, which has become a remarkable milestone in the history of the Regional Centre.

The anniversary meeting held in Nepal has conclusively shown that in the course of 10 years the Regional Centre has turned into a very important mechanism, an active facilitator of the dialogue on regional peace and disarmament. The informal atmosphere of the "Kathmandu process" contributed to free and open discussions and eventually to establishing mutual trust and cooperation in the sensitive areas of security and disarmament.

In its work the Centre is closely cooperating with the Association of South-East Asian Nations Regional Forum (ARF) and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP). It is also exploring avenues for enhancing its cooperation with other subregional organizations, such as the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD) and the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) to promote a subregional dialogue on peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula. Recently it has been actively involved in the efforts of the Central Asian States in working out a legal groundwork for the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, upon the request made by them in General Assembly resolution 52/38 S, adopted last year. In furtherance of these efforts, the Centre organized a series of informal meetings in New York and two expert meetings in Geneva. It also provided organizational and substantive support for the Consultative Meeting of Experts of the Central Asian States and the Nuclear-Weapon States hosted by the Kyrgyz Republic on 9 and 10 July 1998 in Bishkek. I wish to reiterate that we are sincerely grateful both to the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, and the Director of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Tsutomu Ishiguri, for their invaluable assistance and support for the endeavours of the Central Asian States to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region.

However, the "Kathmandu process" cannot continue to play its important role without sound financial resources. So far it has existed entirely on generous voluntary contributions from some Governments, without any support from the United Nations budget. In our view, this very serious issue has to be addressed and solved. We should keep the "Kathmandu process" going. We need the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Central Asia and the Pacific.

To conclude, I should like to express our readiness to continue our fruitful cooperation with the Centre.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I remind delegations wishing to postpone the submission of draft resolutions that they are requested to inform the secretariat now. If by the end of the meeting we have received no information on this subject, we shall take it that all draft

resolutions have been submitted correctly, by the deadline of 6 p.m. today.

I now call on the representative of Israel, who wishes to make a special announcement.

Mr. Sabel (Israel): I appreciate your giving me the opportunity to speak on a subject that is not on the Committee's agenda, Mr. Chairman.

I should like to inform the Committee that we have received information that Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat will shortly be signing an agreement at the White House. I believe this is very welcome news for all of us here. I wish to express on this occasion appreciation to President Clinton and the United States Government for their efforts to help achieve this agreement. I also wish to express appreciation for the leading role in the peace process played by Egypt and President Mubarak. We also appreciate the role and continued support of the European Union in this process. And finally we appreciate the personal intervention made by His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan. I know all delegations will join us here in wishing good health to King Hussein and expressing our good wishes to the people of Jordan.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I thank the delegation of Israel for that information. It is a piece of news that cannot but cause great rejoicing among delegations in the First Committee.

Does any other delegation wish to speak this afternoon?

Mr. Felicio (Brazil): I should like briefly to mention two draft resolutions we will be considering this year in the First Committee.

The first is draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.2, "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia". I wish to congratulate the delegations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on having presented the draft resolution and to announce that my Government has decided to co-sponsor it. We consider that the draft resolution goes in the same direction as the policy adopted by my Government on nuclear proliferation and disarmament.

I also wish to mention the draft resolution we are submitting today on a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere. I should like to thank the delegations that have participated in the extensive consultations of the past few days for their flexibility and positive contribution towards reaching a text that we believe will command even wider support this year.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): As no other delegation wishes to speak, I call on the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): So far I have received notification of only three draft resolutions for which delegations wish to extend the deadline for submission until Monday at 6 p.m. The first, entitled "Nuclear Disarmament", is sponsored by Myanmar. The second, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world", is sponsored by Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden and others. The other concerns the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) and is sponsored by the non-aligned countries. That means that so far there will be only three exceptions.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): We can therefore express our gratification at the agreement arrived at yesterday. The submission of three draft resolutions is postponed until Monday. All the other draft resolutions must be handed to the secretariat before 6 p.m. today.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.